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ALAAmericanLibraryAssociation

April 28, 1997

Mr. William F. Caton
Acting Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW   Room 222
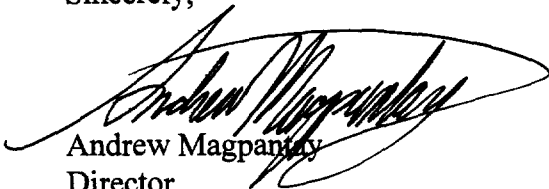Washington, DC 20554

Re: Ex Parte Presentation
       CC Docket No: 96-45, Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service

Dear Mr. Caton:

The American Library Association today sent the following editorials to all four FCC
Commissioners as well as the state members of the Joint Board.

If you have any questions about these materials, please contact me at 202/628 8421.

Sincerely,

Andrew Magpantay
Director
Office for Information Technology Policy
American Library Association

Enclosure

CC:

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ALAAmericanLibraryAssociation

April 28, 1997

Reed E. Hundt, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW Room 814
Washington, DC 20554

Re: CC Docket No: 96-45, Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service

Honorable Chairman Hundt,

As we approach the deadline for the final FCC ruling in CC 96-45, the American Library
Association would like to reaffirm its strong support for the Recommendations of the Joint
Board on Universal Service. These recommendations represent a fair, considered approach
to solving the challenge of moving America's schools and libraries into the information
age. At the same time, the recommendations provide fair, reasonable, and predictable
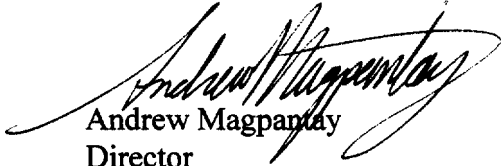burdens on carriers, allowing them to plan their business accordingly.

Enclosed are a number of articles which have appeared in recent months which deal with
the issue of connections to the information superhighway for schools and libraries. The
strong public support which this proposal has received from the public and the press shows
that the American people clearly support the idea of using universal service funds to
connect schools and libraries to the future.

In fact, a recent public opinion poll conducted for the National School Boards Association
reports that the public supports providing discounts on services to schools. The same poll
shows that Americans from all walks of life are willing to support the additional costs that
will be incurred to make effective use of advanced telecommunications technologies.

Despite the public's support for moving into the future, however, schools and libraries have
been unable to do so -- largely because of the prohibitively high cost of
telecommunications services. Providing discounts on these services will help schools and
libraries to meet the needs of all students and patrons.

On behalf of the millions of students and library patrons who stand to benefit from the outcome of the universal service proceeding, I would like to thank you again for your work for schools and libraries in this proceeding.

Sincerely,

Andrew Magpantay
Director
Office for Information Technology Policy
American Library Association

Enclosure

CC: Reed Hundt, Chairman, FCC
Susan Ness, Commissioner, FCC
Rachelle Chong, Commissioner, FCC
Ken McClure, Vice Chairman, Missouri PSC
Julia Johnson, Commissioner, Florida PSC
Sharon Nelson, Chairman, Washington UTC
Laska Schoenfelder, Commissioner, South Dakota PUC
Martha Hogerty, Missouri Public Counsel
Debra Kriete, Pennsylvania PUC
Tom Reid, Florida PSC
Lee Palogyi, Washington UTC
Kathy Brown, NTIA
Jim McConnaughey, NTIA
Barbara Pryor, Office of Senator Jay Rockefeller

EDITORIALS

THE TENNESSEAN
A Gannett Newspaper

Plugging in at the library

CONGRESS did the right thing last year when it added a provision to the telecommunications bill calling for significant discounts on a variety of telecommunication services to libraries and schools.

Federal regulators now must keep the teeth in that provision.

One of the cornerstones of the massive 1996 Telecommunications Act is a provision calling for universal service. Congress wanted to assure as it was reviewing and restructuring a whole range of telecommunication services that families and individuals with limited resources would not be denied access to those services.

One of the crucial elements of universal service, as it appears in the new law, is a provision giving libraries and schools discounted telecommunications rates.

The Federal Communications Commission is now in the process of writing rules that will put the law's provisions to work. Among the many details to be worked out are exactly how the discounts should be calculated and the terms and conditions of those discounts.

The FCC is also considering deeper discounts for libraries and schools in high-cost areas, such as rural communities, as well as in low-income areas.

The notion behind these discounts is obvious. Libraries and schools, which are supported by taxpayers, get similar discounts on other materials. Despite this nation's increasing dependence on telecommunications services, including the

Law calls for discounts for libraries, schools

Internet, many families, individuals, students and small businesses cannot afford to be plugged in at home or at work. That current lack of universal service is exactly why it is vital that every public library and school takes full advantage of telecommunications.

When libraries and schools are plugged in, everyone will have access.

Despite the provision's merit, some representatives of the telecommunications industry are now balking about the size of the discount. If the FCC follows one internal recommendation, the aggregate discount to libraries and schools would be about $2.25 billion annually.

On its face, that seems like a huge discount to exact from one industry. But the telecommunications industry itself is huge and extremely profitable. It can afford the discounts.

Moreover, that money will act as an investment in telecommunications in the future. Many of the students and library patrons who become acquainted with on-line information services will eventually go on line in their own homes and offices.

This discount isn't a give-away. It's an investment. And it's also a commitment to democracy that the federal government needs to keep. ■

PUBLIC ACCESS TO COMPUTERS

N.J. needs more

When the New Jersey Department of Personnel eliminated its monthly jobs bulletin last year, it gave the following explanation: The information about available civil-service positions could easily be accessed on the Internet.

Sure — for unemployed people who can afford a computer and an Internet hookup. Or are lucky enough to have a nearby public library with a computer — or a computer that doesn't take a week to reserve.

This has been National Library Week. And library activists have wisely focused public attention on what should be the top priority in this area: Getting more public access to the Internet.

But putting computers in libraries is costly. The budget news this year is better than expected. Gov. Christie Whitman's proposed funding for public libraries remains level at about $13 million — rather than being cut, as the library community had feared.

Still, that doesn't mean the news is good. In 1989, library funding was $16 million. And the need for computers was less intense a decade ago.

The state Department of Personnel's action says it all: Goodbye, paper; hello, cyberspace. But while the state is putting more and more information online, it needs to ensure that everyone in New Jersey has reasonably convenient access to the Internet. In New Jersey, only 40 percent of the population has home computers.

The New Jersey Library Association is asking the state to find a way to appropriate $10 million to invest in computers for libraries. That's not unreasonable.

New Jersey's budget has been so tightened by ill-advised tax cuts and years of one-shot budgeting that flat funding has become good news. But in the area of public access to computers, it's not good enough. All New Jersey residents deserve access to an information-highway on-ramp.

OPINION

State should forge more library Internet links

The New Jersey Library Association's Log-On Day yesterday highlighted a worthy cause: the importance of connecting all libraries in the state to the Internet.

The access to computerized information all over the world that the Internet provides to computer users is wonderful. A computer user with Internet access can check out an out-of-state college's entrance requirements, read an article from a newspaper published 3,000 miles away or do extensive research for a school paper. But many families struggling to get by from one paycheck to the next find a home computer not yet within their financial reach.

"As more and more information is becoming available only on the Internet," Lynn Randall, president of the library association, said, "those without access to computers are quickly becoming disenfranchised in the information society . . . Libraries have always been the great equalizer of information for the public and must continue that role in the electronic age."

An example of information now available on computer is the New Jersey Department of Personnel's listings for Civil Service job testing.

"That's the only way you can get them now," said Priscilla Gardner, manager of the Miller Branch of the Jersey City Public Library.

With the help of city officials, Gardner's branch library developed a terrific computer center with eight computers that have Internet access. Gardner said that center is busy all day long, with job hunters and other adults, as well as high school and grammar school students, using the computers.

At the Bayonne Free Public Library and Cultural Center, where computer resources have been aided by state grants, there has been plenty of use of computers that provide Internet access via the Baytech Corp., and the library will soon be providing access through three more computers at its main building and one at each of its two branches.

"It's not a frill anymore," Bayonne library official Joanne Corbett said. "It's a necessity."

She's right.

To aid the development of such access at more libraries, especially in low-income and moderate-income neighborhoods, a proposed technology bond issue merits the support of both elected officials and the public.

In addition, the state should make sure it provides sufficient operating aid to help libraries develop and maintain these links while continuing to supply the standard reference materials and freely circulating books that have been so important to education and literacy in New Jersey for generations.

Officials of local libraries in Hudson County should be alert to take advantage of whatever grants the state does offer.

Encourage

BEST SALESMAN WE'VE EVER HAD!

BIG BUCKS

Opinion

OUR VIEW Editorials

Getting to the resources

Libraries need help to upgrade computer access

At public libraries throughout New Jersey yesterday, patrons were urged to log onto the Internet, assuming their local branch had Internet access. Most still do not.

Library users in Monmouth and Ocean counties were among the more fortunate. Log-On Day gave them the opportunity to make use of the advanced information technology already in place at two of the state's best library systems.

The special event was scheduled as part of National Library Week and the New Jersey Library Association's effort to focus attention on the budget problems of many of the state's 312 municipal and county libraries. Support for public libraries, in local, county and state budgets, falls far short of reflecting the value of libraries to New Jersey residents, 60 percent of whom are regular patrons.

Ocean County's system of 19 libraries is the most heavily used in the state. The number of books and other material borrowed from Monmouth County's main library has more than doubled in the past decade. Both county systems have enjoyed strong support from county freeholders, allowing the libraries to computerize their catalogs and to provide access to the Internet and other on-line services.

Smaller municipal libraries, however, have not been as lucky. The Long Branch library, for example, has just one computer terminal capable of accessing the Internet. Its use is limited to library staffers. At some libraries, appointments must be made far in advance to use the few computers available. Other libraries, especially in New Jersey's urban areas, have no computers with modems to allow patrons to access the Internet.

The lack of computer resources in New Jersey libraries is especially disturbing at a time when the amount of information available online is exploding. Some federal funds are being used to try to get at least one Internet access point into every library in New Jersey by 2000. That's far from adequate.

State aid for public libraries, which helps pay for operating costs and materials, has declined in the past decade from $16.3 million in 1987-88 to a proposed $13.1 million in 1997-98. Although the Whitman administration proposes holding library spending steady in the coming year, that will allow libraries do to no more than hold their own.

Unless public libraries are allowed to become major entrance ramps to the information superhighway, a large segment of the state's population will be denied access to vast amounts of important material. Not everyone can afford an elaborate home computer or the cost of accessing online services. Today, more than 60 percent of New Jersey homes still lack computers.

The role of the public library as a great equalizer in the quest for knowledge deserves re-emphasizing during this National Library Week. Knowledge, as always, is power. Giving people access to that power means giving them a chance to succeed.

Having the ability to access vast amounts of information from remote locations is a wonder that many people are just now beginning to appreciate. Rather than make libraries a thing of the past, however, the volume of data now available increases the need for libraries — and their staffs — to bring order to what easily could become information chaos.

Residents of Monmouth and Ocean counties should rejoice that their county freeholders have had the foresight to develop fine public libraries. As citizens of New Jersey however, area residents should not forget that others in the state need access to the same information resources.

That's why the governor and the Legislature should establish, as the state library association has proposed, a trust fund to finance capital investments in public libraries. Surely if a penny from some state fee or tax were set aside for libraries, enough money would be available to make every public library the information resource it ought to be. Under the budget proposed by Gov. Whitman, state aid to libraries amounts to 96 cents for each state resident.

Anyone who has doubts about the usefulness of the Internet or a library's ability to harness its power should take time this week to make a visit, either real or virtual. Information about the Ocean County library system is available by calling (908) 349-6200 or the individual branches, or by accessing the library's World Wide Web site:
http://netra.oceancounty.lib.nj.us

Monmouth County Library information is available by calling (908) 431-7220 or by accessing the library's World Wide Web site:
http://shore.co.monmouth.nj.us/library

The public library remains essential to democracy, treating all as equals and giving all an opportunity to visit and learn.

editorial

The Times

Entry points needed

New Jerseyans are in danger of being left behind on the information superhighway because there aren't enough on-ramps.

Less than 40 percent of the population of this state has access to the Internet on personal computers at home or work. The logical place for the rest of us to log on is at our public libraries — the institutions that for two centuries have been the repositories of the information the people need to better their lives and thereby make the nation stronger.

But most of the state's 312 municipal and county libraries don't have the funds to computerize. A survey last year by the State Library found that of the 194 libraries that responded, only 38 offered public access to the Internet and 25 of them are in Morris County. The demand is heavy in those places: at the South Brunswick, Cherry Hill and Cumberland County libraries, patrons must reserve an hour of computer time at least a week in advance.

The state budget for libraries, which was $16.309,000 in 1989, was cut to $13,112,000 in 1991 and has stayed at that reduced level ever since, including in Gov. Whitman's proposed 1997-98 budget. This amount includes $7.6 million that must be used for books and tapes, personnel and maintenance. Any money spent on computers for the public use has to come from what's left over. There's no additional funding for technology.

The need is more than a theoretical one. In the past year the state Department of Personnel stopped printing its Job Bulletin, which was a source of governmental employment opportunities for thousands, and began offering this information in electronic form only. Tax information, health information and small business opportunities are among the resources that now are available only on the Internet. Beyond these things is the mountain of general information that's now available on-line for the researchers, students and browsers who constitute a library's clientele.

As Patricia A. Tumulty of the New Jersey Library Association points out, the Legislature created the Transportation Trust Fund to ensure that New Jersey's roads, bridges and trains will be ready for the future. It should have an Information Trust Fund to make certain the state's people can reach the information resources they need. This week — National Library Week — would be an appropriate time for our lawmakers to resolve to establish such a fund.

EDUCATION

MINDSHARE IS A TERRIBLE THING TO WASTE

So Microsoft and Toshiba are scrambling to stoke the education market

At first, Anthony Amato thought someone was playing a bad joke. The community superintendent of New York City School District No. 6 in Harlem had flown all the way to Redmond, Wash., to check out Microsoft Corp.'s plan to put thousands of notebook computers in schools. When he arrived, he was shown a video of upper-crust Australian schoolchildren using Microsoft spreadsheets.

"Here was this beautiful school with well-manicured children talking in prim English accents," recalls Amato, whose district spans some tough streets in Harlem. "God knows what would happen if our kids walked down the street with notebooks under their arms," he remembers thinking. But that evening, Amato had an abrupt change of heart. Whatever the challenges, he decided, his students deserved the latest technology.

A year later, parents in District No. 6 are thanking him for the decision. On any given morning, 20 fifth-graders in the Harlem pilot program are plotting graphs on Toshiba notebook computers using Microsoft Excel and clipping them into Word documents. Parents are learning how to use the computers, too—and splitting the cost with the school. "We've had overwhelming support from the community," says Amato, beaming.

He's not the only one smiling: Fifty-one other American pilot schools are getting upbeat results in the same program, called "Anytime Anywhere Learning." Kathy Klock, curriculum director at the Snohomish School District in Washington State, says engineers who visited one of her fifth grade classes were blown away by PowerPoint presentations given by young students. Not surprisingly, Microsoft and its co-organizer—Toshiba America—are also enthusiasts. "This program enhances critical thinking skills, and the way children analyze data," says Kathryn Yates, director for K-12 at Microsoft's Education Customer Unit, which supports teachers with online materials and technical help. Adds Toshiba America program manager Thomas J. Healey: "The children learn to work with tools that they will use through-out their lives."

As the program gears up, Microsoft could take its biggest step yet outside the business market. But there will be hurdles. Historically, Apple has dominated the school market and still holds a 51% stake, according to a survey by New York's IDC/Link Inc. Apple executives are skeptical about notebooks in schools. "They're not rugged enough," says Apple Computer Inc. marketing manager Robert H. Kondrk. Instead, he's offering schools a sturdy version of the Newton PDA called E-Mate for $699.

Anytime Anywhere participants address this issue by coaching children on how to care for computers. In Harlem, parents help patrol children going to and from school. So far, none of the 52 pilot schools has reported a case of theft or loss.

Schools and parents in the Anytime Anywhere program purchase or lease their notebooks from Toshiba resellers. Hardware and software are discounted, as are service and insurance contracts. The only real guidelines in the program: Notebooks must be high-end models that the students have available 24 hours a day. And students must learn their way around a business suite called Microsoft Office (table, page 92).

STALLED HOME MARKET. If all this sounds a little self-serving—coming from Toshiba and Microsoft—it probably is. Penetration of PCs in American homes is stalled at about 40%, so hardware makers like Toshiba are scrambling to seed new markets. Believe it or not, Microsoft faces a similar challenge. Its hugely successful Office package—worth

SUITE SUCCESS
Fifth graders at New York's Mott Hall School master Microsoft Office

about $3.3 billion last year—has close to 90% of the market for business suites, according to International Data Corp., a market research company. But growth isn't accelerating. "Where do you get new users?" asks IDC consumer software analyst Mary Loffredo Wardley. **CONSTRAINTS.** Enter the education market, which bears a striking resemblance to the corporate market. "Schools have line-items that say 'software,'" says Wardley. "Money is pre-budgeted, and decisions to purchase are made at a high level." The Anytime Anywhere approach also suits school agendas, she says, because the National Bureau of Educational Standards is asking teachers to go beyond math games to programs that impart higher-order skills. "When you use graphing software, you see relationships, and you can make predictions," Wardley says.

Indeed, Microsoft's timing seems perfect. The Washington (D.C.)-based Software Publishers Assn. expects U.S. schools to pump about $4 billion into software and computer gear this year. Software will likely account for just $494 million of the total. But the number is bound to grow. Last October, Congress allocated $200 million for the President's new Technology Literacy Challenge Fund, aimed at upgrading technology in schools. State and city matching grants will double or treble the total grant value. Big chunks of Title One antipoverty grants are earmarked for the same purpose. And on May 8, the Federal Communications Commission is expected to mandate discounts of up to 90% on Internet access for schools. After that, districts may try to get more Net-ready PCs on school desks.

This gush of grants and discounts springs from a strong bipartisan movement to prepare students for the high-tech workplace. Microsoft's new thrust into schools is in perfect synch with its emphasis on portable technology that parents and students share. "It's a well thought-out program," says Anne Bryant, executive director of the National School Board Assn. (NSBA) in Alexandria, Va., which contributed expertise to Microsoft early on. School districts are struggling to bring parents into the learning process, she points out. "One portable computer per student is every educator's dream."

How big could the new notebook initiative become? In a word, humongous. About 52 million children are enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Another 5 million attend private schools. Every child is a target and every parent a potential cheerleader. "The response from parents has been phenomenal," says Mirian Acosta-Sing, principal of the Mott Hall School for gifted children in Manhattan's District No. 6, which Microsoft has used in videotapes and brochures to publicize its initiative.

Microsoft's success in the schools is practically guaranteed, say education market analysts, since teachers are already enthusiastic about its Office suite. Quality Education Data—a Denver-based education research firm—did an intent-to-purchase survey before Microsoft even dreamed up Anytime Anywhere. Recalls Jeanne Hayes, president and CEO of QED: "Microsoft Office was at the top of the list."

Australian teachers who have run a similar program for six years are among the most persuasive advocates for the

Getting parents involved is crucial to successful education, and "the response from parents has been phenomenal," says one principal

new initiative. About 20,000 Australian children now tote notebooks to school each day. The teachers' reports from the front lines—conveniently packaged in Microsoft's public-relations material—dazzle American educators. "The children help their friends with difficult programs," exults Ken Rowe, principal of Frankston High School in Melbourne, who is on a whirlwind tour of U.S. schools arranged by Microsoft and Toshiba. "They take control of their own learning."

If America has fallen behind, its high-tech multinationals intend to help it catch up. As Anytime Anywhere spreads, other PC companies are certain to jump on board. Compaq Computer Corp., for one, already has a program in place to make high-end notebooks available to college students at very competitive prices. "This is something we could do in K-12 schools as well," says Sue Collins, Compaq's director for education marketing.

Telecom service companies are also gearing up. Over the next five years, AT&T alone will spend $150 million to train teachers and help usher more schools into cyberspace. "Today, 45% of private-sector employees must use high-technology tools in the workplace," says Joan Fenwick, director of the AT&T Learning Network, which disburses the funds. In 2000, she says, the number will exceed 60%. "This investment is critical to our economic future."

To help Anytime Anywhere, AT&T has given six months of free Internet service to the Mott Hall School in Harlem. That's a perfect gift for Yaa-Afriyie Du-Berry, 10, a laptop-wise African American in the pilot program. She scrolls quickly through a PowerPoint demo of her story on how human beings got taste buds. Pausing for a minute, she defers credit for the animations. "It's clip art," she says. "I only had four days to put it together." Just imagine what she can accomplish in the next 10 years.

By Neil Gross in New York, with bureau reports

SETTING UP A SCHOOL LAPTOP PROGRAM

DOES EVERY CHILD IN THE CLASS NEED A NOTEBOOK?

It helps. Students will use the computers for most subjects at school and to complete assignments at home.

HOW MUCH DOES THE COMPUTER COST?

Typical leases run about $70 a month, including service and insurance. Purchase prices start at about $2,000.

WHAT KIND OF HARDWARE IS BEST?

Pilot programs all used Toshiba color laptops, but any durable machine will do. CD-ROM drives and fast modems are recommended.

CAN CHILDREN TAKE CARE OF THEIR LAPTOPS?

To be safe, lease terms should include insurance and provisions for "loaner" machines.

DO TEACHERS NEED SPECIAL TRAINING?

Yes. Australian teachers with the most experience recommend a year of training. Fortunately, children also teach one another.